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The Home and Family Living Program described consists of an elective course in social psychology offered at the two Schenectady, New York, high schools. The subject matter of the course is family life, and it deals with such aspects as child growth and development, family relationships and management, and self-control and understanding. Its unique feature is the provision of a living laboratory through interaction of teachers, high school pupils, prekindergartners, and prekindergartners' parents.

The original staff, which has since been expanded, consisted of a social psychology teacher, a prekindergarten specialist, and a teacher who conducted the parents' group. Team teaching and staff cooperation are still major factors, with daily joint planning and evaluation, which have resulted in the relation of ideas from one situation to circumstances in another.

Facilities for the program are provided in the two schools involved by: making available a prekindergarten room, a residentially-furnished classroom, and two all-purpose classrooms in one school; and renovating the existing structure to provide a social psychology classroom, a prekindergarten room, and two home economics classrooms in the other school. Both schools contain preschool play areas and appropriate outdoor equipment.

The program was so successful in the first school in which it was tried that one class was started in the other high school, and in midyear another section was added because of student requests. The next fall five classes in the family living program were organized. Those connected with the program feel that it has matured the participating high school students and has given them a realistic insight into their problems and goals.

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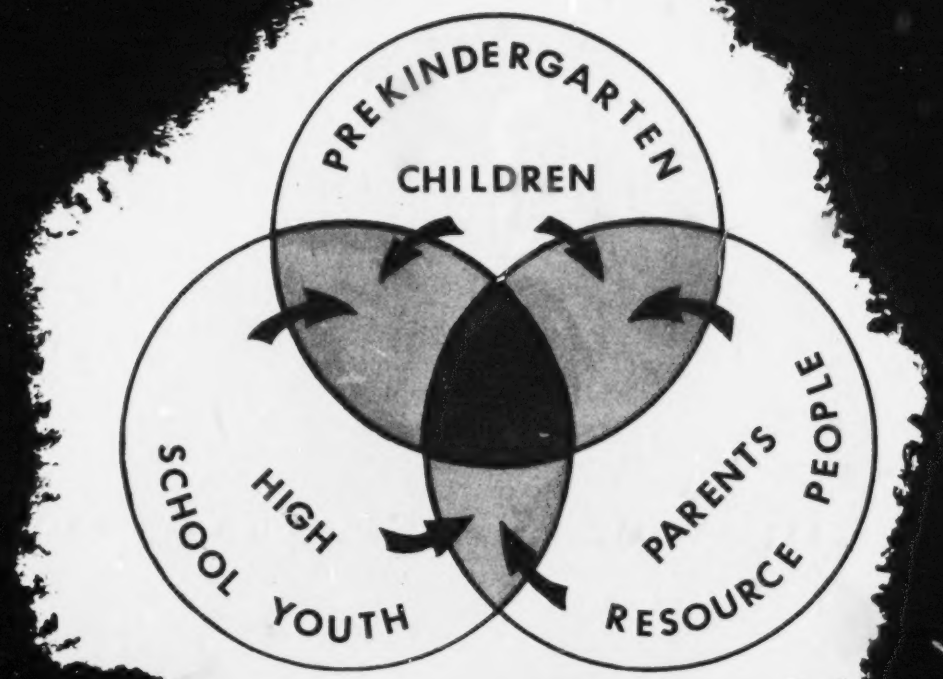

. . . . understanding through interaction

HOME and FAMILY LIVING PROGRAM

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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SCHENECTADY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, SCHENECTADY, NEW YORK

PREFACE

The family is the most enduring of all institutions, yet in today's society each generation of families faces many new, complex, and unique problems. Changes affecting the function of the family and the roles of family members are so rapid and so varied that tradition alone cannot be depended upon to ensure good homes and strong families. The family is the institution that 1) furnishes meaning to human dignity, individual personality and democratic living, 2) molds the moral and spiritual nature of people and in turn a nation, 3) provides individual security and sets standards for individual and group integrity, 4) transmits our heritage from generation to generation, and 5) is the basic social, cultural and economic unit.

Acknowledgement of these conditions stimulated the development of the Schenectady home and family living program which involves parents, high school youth and pre-kindergarten children. The program is briefly described in this publication for those interested in youth, their future and the future of our nation. It is hoped that this description will provide insight into the total program and stimulate interest for developing similar programs in other places.

The staff of the Bureau of Home Economics Education in the State Education Department appreciates the vision and accomplishments evidenced in this program. We are convinced that the opportunity to participate in a pre-school group is the best way to help youth understand human behavior and to work toward achievement of the kind of relationships which lead to stable, happy and effective home life.

Dorothy S. Lawson, Chief
Bureau of Home Economics Education

J0710

HOME and FAMILY LIVING

Introduction

The home and family living program in the Schenectady high schools creates understanding through the interaction of three groups and their teachers: high school youths, prekindergartners and the prekindergartners' parents.

As the course title implies, the program is aimed at creating a more thorough understanding of the family as a dynamic social institution, especially through knowledge of the behavior and motivations of children, high school youths, and parents.

The high school social psychology classes are conducted informally and all three facets of the program utilize a variety of teaching techniques. The high school pupils in this course participate in the prekindergarten and make reports on their observations. In other gatherings, the high school youths and the parents of the prekindergartners discuss topics related to the social psychology course, their experiences and problems.

The rationale of the program is twofold: first, education has a responsibility to the individual to assist his maximum development, and second, the schools have an obligation to society to strive to graduate responsible, more mature young adults.

The home and family living program has been shown to "hit the kids where they live" - to give them realistic insight into their personal problems and goals. It also creates a much better understanding of the importance of the family from an individual and social standpoint and is, in its best sense, a form of non-directive guidance.

The ability of the high school youth to understand himself also is enhanced by the "role reversal"

(cont.)

thinking that takes place when he considers the prekindergartner in relation to himself, as well as when he projects himself as a future parent—undoubtedly relating such thought both to his own parents and to what he has learned about parental roles in our culture and elsewhere.

The interaction with members of the prekindergarten classes not only facilitates such thinking for the high school pupil, but gives worthwhile growth experience to the young children. Correspondingly, discussion meetings with the prekindergartners' parents are illuminating for the parents and the high school youths.

Additional "real world" interaction comes from community consultants. For example, doctors have joined the classes to discuss family physical and mental health. Such talks with specialists strengthen the course in attaining its objectives.

The importance of this program to society is underscored when we consider that our nation and our community need young people who, as they mature, improve their capacity to make successful choices for life in our increasingly complex society.

We are being challenged, on the national, state, community and interpersonal levels, to deal with a more youthful population, teen-age marriages, large families, a changing and selective labor market and a highly mobile population. Many of the problems arising from these conditions are best solved in our democracy through successful choices by the individuals involved.

The ability to choose wisely is strengthened as youth achieves a more realistic self-conception and understanding of the importance and values of the family unit in our own and other cultures. This is our program.

BENEFITS OF THE HOME AND FAMILY LIVING PROGRAM

high school youth

- gain insight and increased understanding of self and others through opportunities to work with children and parents as well as with their own group.
- learn to appreciate and weigh ethical and moral values that freedom places upon the individual.
- acquire some of the skills necessary for satisfactory personal and group living.
- grow in maturity of understanding of self and young children through study and observation of the preschoolers' patterns of development.
- appreciate the individual differences in children.
- discuss in class and in conferences questions and problems of immediate concern.
- realistically improve their self-confidence.
- have more thoughtful career ambitions.
- learn in greater depth about topics of particular interest through firsthand experience with community and faculty consultants.
- gain insights and appreciation of the significance and responsibilities of the family as a basic unit in our society.

parents

- better understand four-year-old children.
- become increasingly objective about their own children.
- gain in perception through group study of topics of mutual interest and selection.
- develop greater understanding of the viewpoints, concerns and goals of youth.
- participate rewardingly in the programs for prekindergartners and high school youth as consultants sharing their professions, avocational skills or experiences as parents.
- gain understanding of the goals of education and the necessity for cooperation and correlation of home and school from prekindergarten through secondary education.

prekindergartners

- grow in self-assurance through interaction with staff, other youngsters of their own age, with the high school pupils, and members of the parents' group.
- develop more, socially and emotionally, in the planned preschool experiences.
- enlarge their horizons through experience with the varied interests and abilities of the high school youth, as well as those of parents other than their own.

THE PROGRAM

. . . understanding through interaction

The elective course in social psychology offered at the two Schenectady high schools deals with information from the various fields concerned with family life.

The content comes primarily from the areas of family life education, adolescent psychology, and child development. It includes such topics as family relationships and management, self-understanding and control, and child growth and development. Bringing together teachers, high school pupils, prekindergartners and their parents, provides a living laboratory for the course. These interrelated elements—the social psychology classes, the prekindergarten classes and the parents' groups—interact to form the high school home and family living program.

The focus of Schenectady's curriculum in social psychology is on the family: as a social, economic and interpersonal unit. The interaction phases of the program are a living laboratory for the pupils, pricking their perceptions with realities.

Course content comes from the fields of family life education, adolescent psychology, and child development. From the first area, it includes such subjects as family relationships, family management and intelligent consumer purchasing. From the second, it deals with the topics of self-understanding and control, emotions, and boy-girl relationships. Related to child development are discussions and observations concerning behavior, growth and development.

From a broader standpoint, the content of the program is aimed at familiarizing the pupil with values, personality development, inter-personal and family relationships and social dynamics. Resource persons from the community, including parents, often lend immediacy to particular topics.

Participation in the prekindergarten program and discussions with the childrens' parents give the pupils a more realistic conception of human growth and parental problems and rewards. The parent groups and the teachers responsible for their program decide what aspects of family living concern them most. Committees and study groups are formed and may be related to the program for the high school pupils. The prekindergarten classes center around the interests and needs of children of this age: art, music, games and outdoor play. A schedule for involvement of the high school pupils is included in its organization.

THE STAFF

. . . qualities and qualifications

The enthusiasm, understanding and experience of the teachers in the three-pronged program have been the foundation for the use of varied techniques in instructing each of the three groups separately and as they interact.

Mutual agreement by the three-member staff on goals for the total program has facilitated cooperation and team teaching of the three segments.

Day-by-day joint planning, evaluation and shared teaching of the classes have had fruitful results—particularly in the interaction aspects of the program—by relating ideas from one situation to circumstances occurring in another.

Teachers with special training, interests and abilities are necessary to make the home and family living program successful. They must stimulate the natural motivations of the high school pupils in ways which bring new insights and understanding and properly focus pupils' interests in research, general reading and interaction with the prekindergartners and their parents.

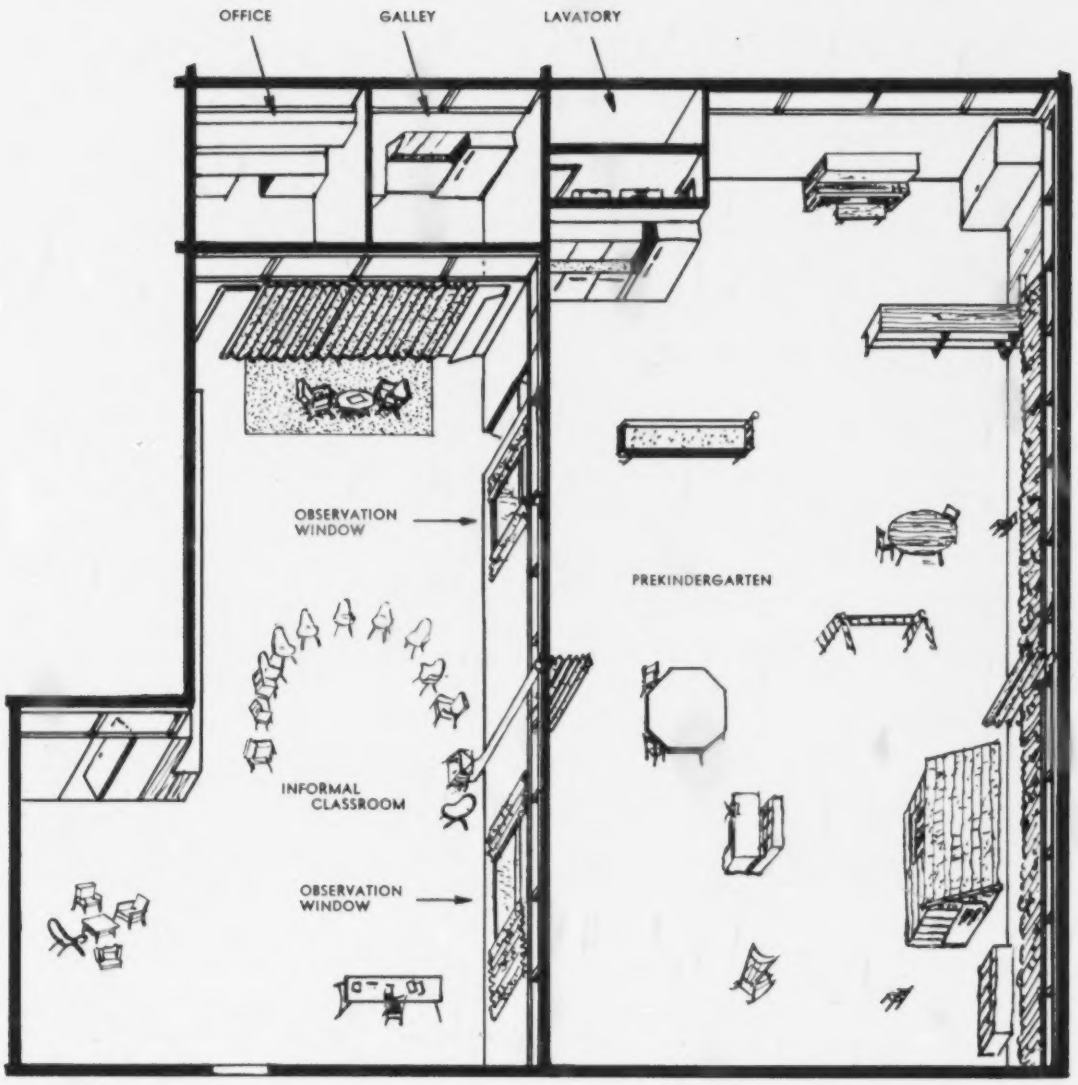
The original team at Linton consisted of three members: the social psychology teacher, the prekindergarten specialist, and the teacher who conducted the parents' group. Prior to initiating the program, their schedules were arranged to permit adequate time for them to prepare detailed procedures, content, and interaction approaches.

Growth, expansion and staff changes have necessitated flexibility in selecting teachers and in organizing their responsibilities, although the basic nature of the program has been maintained. This flexibility has permitted teachers new to the program to employ their particular strengths in productive ways.

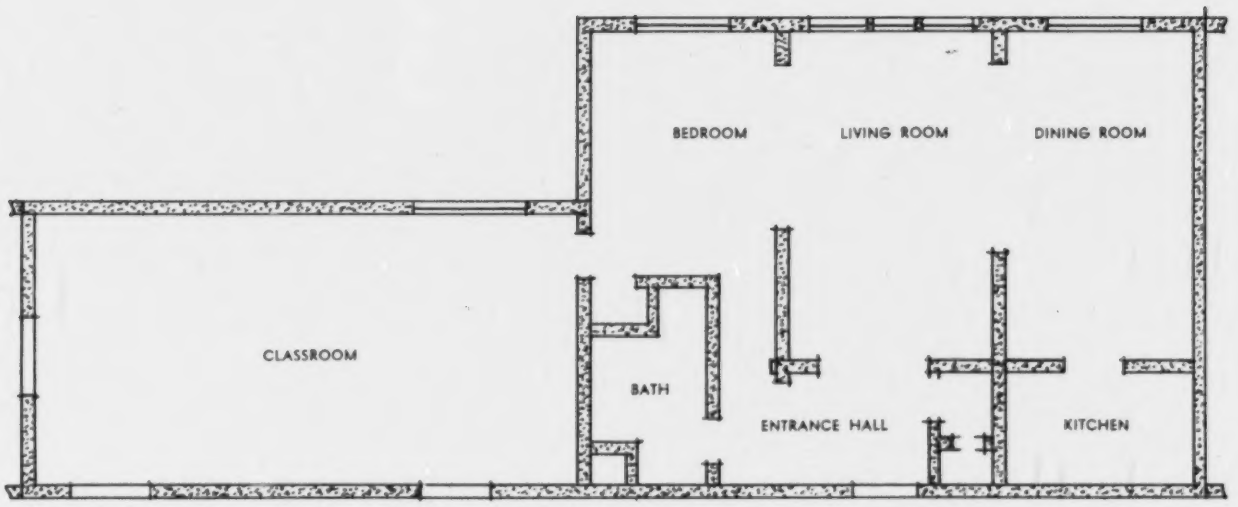
The social psychology classes have been taught by a home economics teacher with a major in family life education, other home economics teachers building their strengths in the necessary areas, and, temporarily, by a school psychologist experienced in group dynamics. The prekindergarten classes have been instructed by early childhood education or primary grade teachers with added preparation. Teachers of the latter type, as well as home economics instructors—both with added competencies—have worked with parents' groups and served as second teachers for the prekindergartens.

To give the program a strong start at the second high school—Mont Pleasant—one of the original team members became a resource person to aid in developing the new course, staff and facilities.

Experienced members of the staff agree that time provided for the creation and exploitation of a team teaching approach, using converging methods of attack, pays large dividends in pupil understanding. Also facilitated by having a common planning period, is the on-going process of evaluation.



LINTON HIGH SCHOOL LAYOUT



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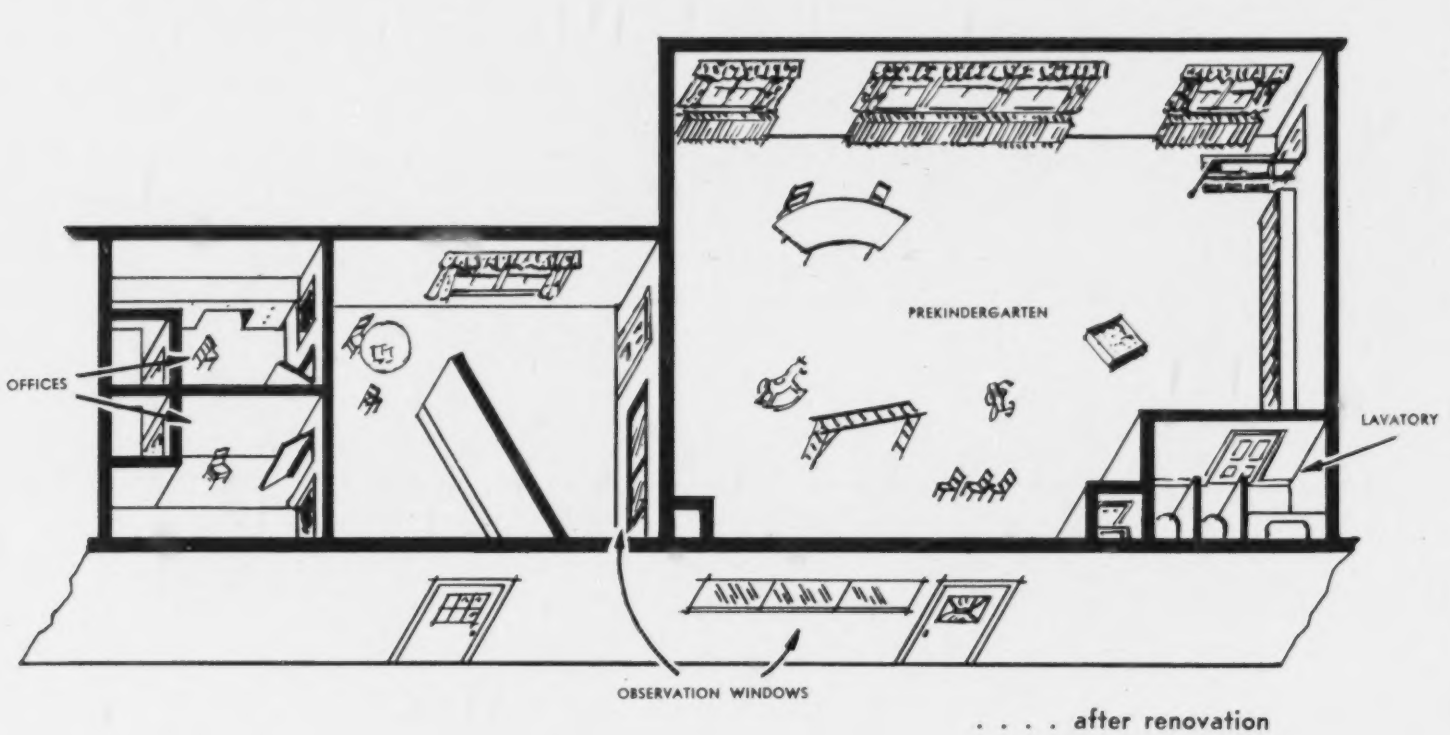
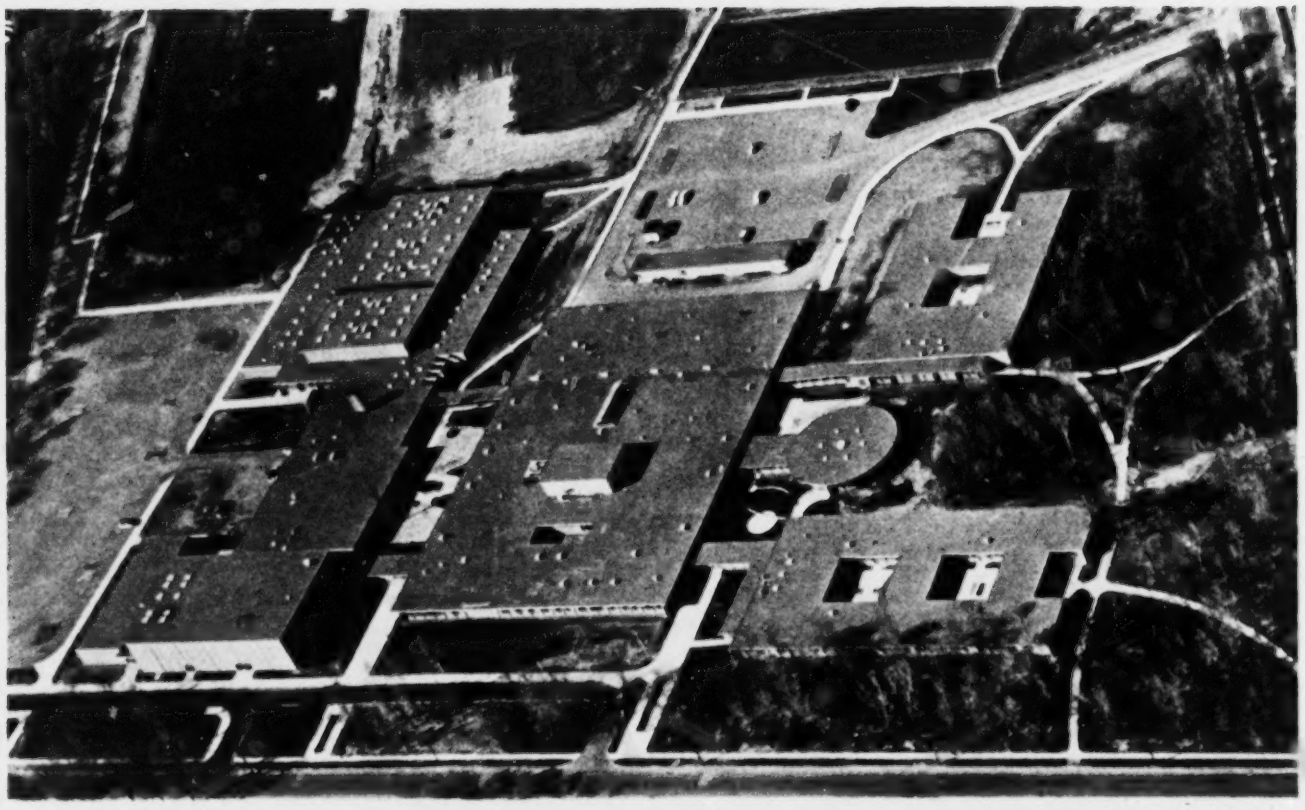
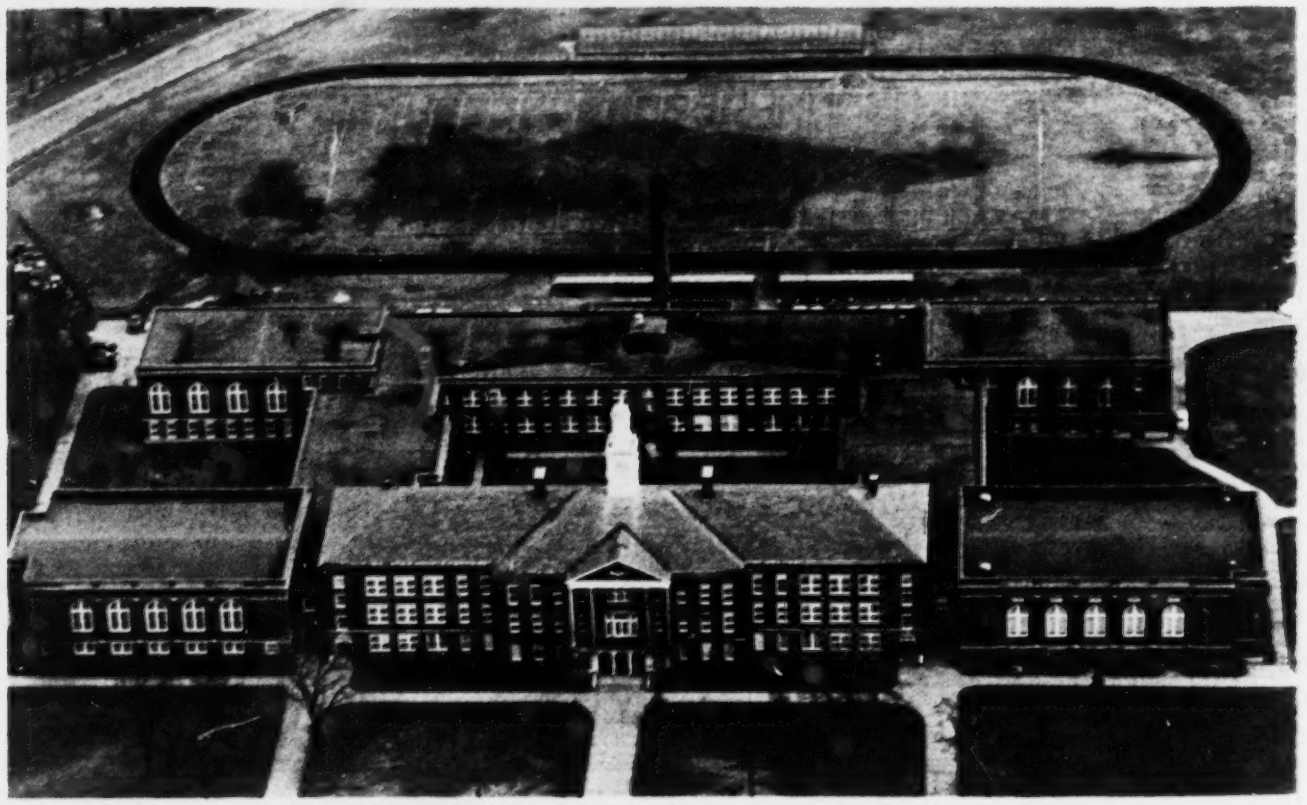


. . . . after renovation

MONT PLEASANT HIGH SCHOOL



LINTON HIGH SCHOOL



MONT PLEASANT HIGH SCHOOL

THE FACILITIES

. . . designing the new, remodeling the old

Schenectady's plans for constructing a high school provided the opportunity to design the new home economics department to include a prekindergarten room, a residentially-furnished classroom, and two all-purpose classrooms. The unit at Mont Pleasant, made by renovating the home economics department in the 1931 building, includes an informal social psychology classroom, a prekindergarten room and two regular home economics classrooms.

The floor plans for the units at both schools are given on the preceding two pages. In the case of Mont Pleasant, the floor plan prior to the renovation is also shown. Use of both facilities has proven them to be satisfactory.

The home economics departments at Linton and Mont Pleasant high schools each includes a social psychology classroom. typical home economics units, a prekindergarten classroom and an appropriately equipped preschool outdoor play area.

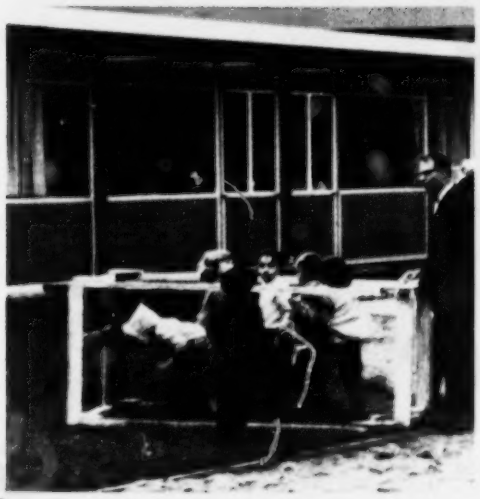
The social psychology classrooms at each school are furnished with residential furniture, giving them an informal atmosphere conducive to discussion.

The rooms for the prekindergarten classes have the usual equipment of a modern nursery school. They also have two-way vision panels which, through lighting control, may be made transparent on one side or the other or both. At Linton, the "other side" is in the social psychology classroom. At Mont Pleasant, one "other side" is in a corridor, while a second is in a special viewing room.

The preschool play areas at both schools are located in safe places where they are not disturbing to classes in the buildings. Appropriate playground equipment is provided. Access to the preschool room and to the playground has been made as easy and practical as possible.

A place for individual conversations with pupils or parents is valuable. Members of the staff have found that the nature of the program tends to engender a need for private conferences.

Creative work by the high school pupils in designing and making games and equipment as a part of their required projects is enhanced by the presence of carefully selected, multiple-use equipment for the preschoolers. Some of these are original constructions by members of the staff or pupils.



DEVELOPMENT

. . . years of growth and refinement

Home and family living education has been a part of the content of the home economics philosophy in Schenectady for decades. However, the current high school home and family living concept was first outlined in the "Preliminary Report for High School Planning, Home and Family Life Education," completed during the early planning for the new high school.

Focusing on the goal that high school boys and girls should understand the importance of the family both socially and personally, recommendations called for informal classes to stimulate discussion, insight and understanding, and for the high school pupils to have firsthand experiences in working with young children and their parents.

Members of the Schenectady staff, as well as other educators, have given thought to an offering along the lines of the present home and family living program for many years. As a result of a complete study of Schenectady's secondary curriculum, the basic conception of the course was stated in a preliminary report on high school planning for home and family life education.

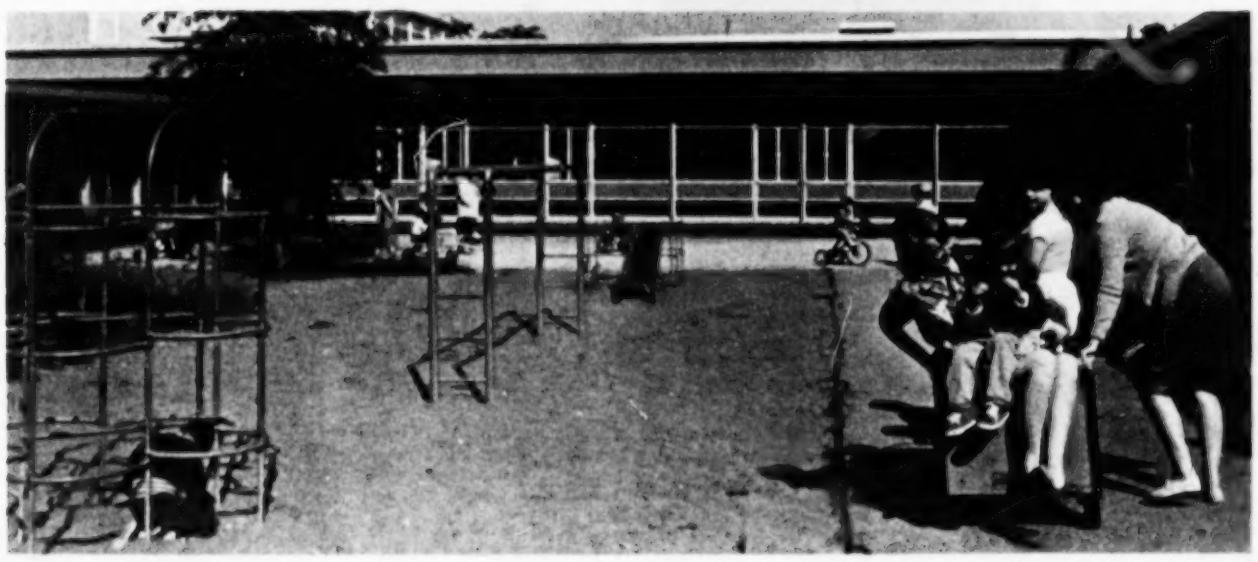
The study focused the attention of the home economics staff on the statement, "All youth need to understand the significance of the family for the individual and society and the conditions conducive to successful family life." The report called for a nursery school as an integrated portion of a program similar to that later created at Linton.

However, one part of the program was achieved in the mid-50's at Nott Terrace High School with the development of a social psychology course with a family life education content.

Soon after the study, the planning of the program for what was to be Linton High School was begun. The supervisor of home economics, other administrators, and members of the faculty at the obsolete Nott Terrace High School plant worked with residents of the city and consultants in evolving the home economics program to be offered in the new high school. When the work was completed, a portion of the school was designed to house the program. It included specific integrated facilities for preschool, social psychology and parent groups.

The planners recommended, among other features, that pupils should work and learn with teachers in an informal setting, one conducive to freer interaction of ideas and mutual sharing of responsibilities. Especially, it was planned that pupils have, within the school day, experiences promoting insight into personal and family life, in part through firsthand work with young children.

It only remained, then, for the final team teaching and detail content planning of the three staff members to bring implementation to the program.



LINTON

. . . new school opportunities

The development of the home and family living program at Linton was an outgrowth of the work mentioned in the previous section. However, it was also the result of much further work done by a team of three Linton teachers and consultants from the Bureau of Home Economics, State Education Department, the Federal Office of Education, and Cornell University.

The three teachers were permitted to schedule time for research, consultation and the development and evaluation of the specific content. They also identified the team teaching techniques to be employed, and carefully designed action research.

Board of Education and the school administration support was, of course, basic.

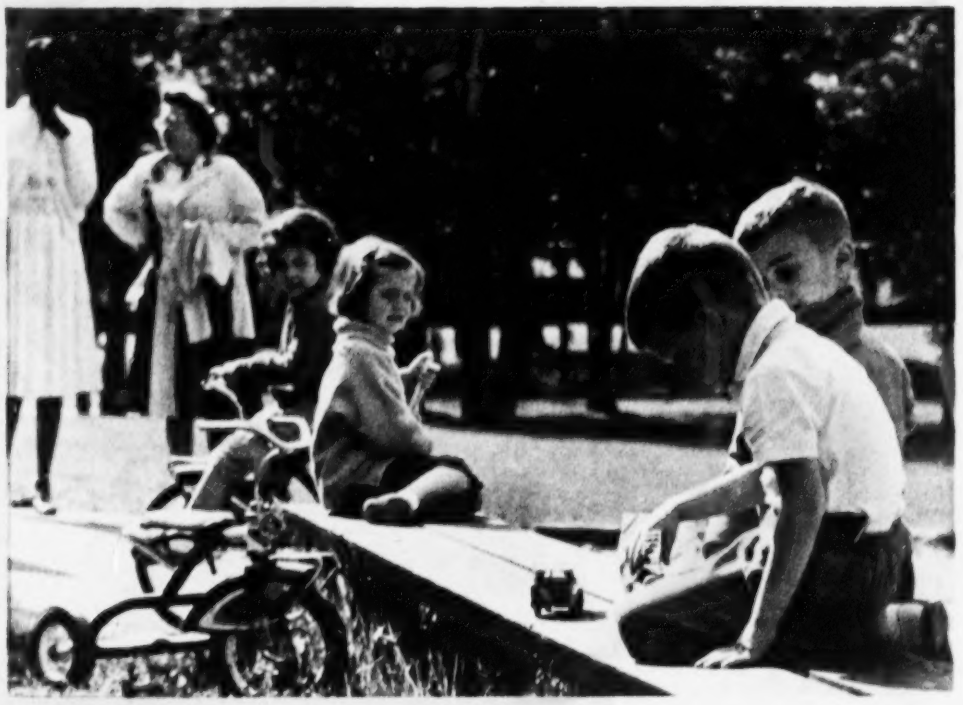
Following earlier directions of the home and family living program, indicated by the preliminary study and subsequent research, the supervisor of home economics named three teachers—one man and two women—to begin detailed planning for the Linton program prior to the opening of the new school.

With their schedules arranged to provide adequate time, this team undertook the research, consultation and planning which resulted in an action research design, including the team teaching approaches to be employed and the content of the three-pronged program.

Researchers from Cornell University developed techniques for testing the hypotheses of the research, using the three morning social psychology classes who worked with the prekindergartners as the experimental group. The three afternoon classes which followed the same curriculum but did not work with the children formed one type of control group, and a matched group of study hall pupils made up a second control group.

Results of the three-year project indicated that the main hypothesis, "The high school youth will gain valuable insights and increased understanding of self and others through opportunities to work with children and young parents, as well as with their peer group," was verified.

As a means of further developing home and family life education in Schenectady, a fourth member was added to the Linton team. He took over a portion of the prekindergarten classes which were added in the afternoon. The original preschool teacher became a part-time consultant to other aspects of the school system's home economics program, including the starting of an interaction program in home and family living at Mont Pleasant High School.



MONT PLEASANT

. . . new uses for existent facilities

Members of the Mont Pleasant High School faculty, as well as of the central administration, kept an interested eye on the home and family living pilot program at Linton High School and on the possibility of extending this program to Mont Pleasant.

After several years of experience at Linton and advanced planning, one social psychology class was started at Mont Pleasant. In mid-year, an additional one-semester section was offered as a result of pupil requests. The next fall, following the renovation of facilities and a heavy pre-registration of pupils, five classes in the home and family living program, with parent involvement and prekindergarten, were launched.

Two features of the home and family living program at Mont Pleasant High School are of particular interest. Renovation of the home economics suite in the 1931 building has shown that facilities can be provided in an older structure. Also, the rapid growth in enrollment indicates there is wide interest among the pupil population in participating in the program.

Guidance counselors at Mont Pleasant cooperated with planners of a new social psychology course in identifying pupils who might especially benefit from such study. The next fall the course was initiated. Added pupil interest caused a one-semester section of the course to be offered in mid-year.

Pupils in these classes had some educational experiences with younger children through the cooperative effort of the consultant from the Linton home and family living program and of a nearby elementary school.

Pupil response to these first courses at Mont Pleasant was impressive and the plan for the renovation of the home economics suite to make it similar to that at Linton was approved later in the spring. The work was completed during the summer and the new program, including a prekindergarten, parental involvement and five high school classes, was started in the fall.

The consultant continued as coordinator for the preschool program at both high schools and assisted the primary teacher in developing the new group at Mont Pleasant. He also was responsible for the parent program there.

Although the programs are basically the same at both high schools, Mont Pleasant has diverged slightly in some features to take advantage of the strengths of its particular staff and curriculum, as well as to meet differing pupil, parent and local community needs and interests.

CONCLUSION

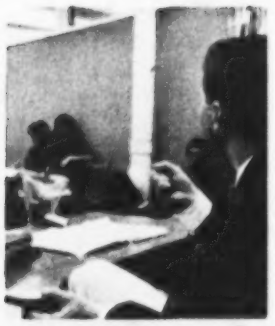
Leaders in the Schenectady school system and community have been convinced for many years that a home and family living program was not only desirable, but would add real strength to the youth maturing into its adult community.

Experience now has shown that the program does meet its objectives, that it " 'hits the kids where they live' and gives them realistic insight into their problems and goals . . . creats a much better understanding of the importance of the family from an individual and a social standpoint, and is, in its best sense, a form of non-directive guidance."

The Schenectady schools, of course, are not alone in thinking that when the pupil has a misconception of himself, or of what his future roles are likely to be, his choices are apt to be proportionately biased. But the Schenectady schools have found that the insight and understanding stimulated in many youths during their work in the home and family living program tend to make their judgements more sensible in relation to their real abilities and desires.

The Schenectady program is a study of relationships: how the individual relates to self and others, how the roles within the family complement each other, and how the family as a dynamic institution relates to society. The empathy of the individual with others, as well as each person's "separateness," is considered. Illuminating these ideas in the minds of teen-agers has a profound effect on them. They achieve a conception and insight which is much more mature and may well bring them to a deeper, more secure emotional stage.

To accomplish these results, Schenectady has found the program requires appropriate facilities and, most important, sensitive instructors who work closely as a team to evaluate and improve the program, motivate the pupils and involve parents satisfactorily. Insight is a complex product to produce.



. . . understanding through interaction

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